In the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph starting on page 13, line 21 with the following replacement paragraph:

Turning now to Figure 1E, another embodiment of carrier 30 is shown. In this embodiment, carrier 30 includes chains 48A-B that are configured to secure containers 40A-[[G]]I into carrier 30. While a number of different configurations for carrier 30 have been described herein, other configurations are possible and contemplated. For example, combinations of locking clips 46A-C, chains 48A-B, and cover 44 may be used. Other fastening devices such as latches and lids that are configured to be bolted onto carrier 30 may also be used in addition to, or in lieu of, the configurations described above.

Please replace the paragraph starting on page 14, line 22 with the following replacement paragraph:

Turning now to Figure 1K, one embodiment of carrier 30 that allows automated packing and unpacking of containers is shown. In this embodiment, two opposing sides of container 30 are opened to allow an automated pusher arm 26 to push a selected container (i.e., container 40A in this example) onto a loading platform 27. As shown in the figure, the automated pusher arm 26 and loading dock 27 may be positioned so as to allow carrier 30 to be loaded and unloaded without being removed from the vehicle 25 that is transporting the carrier (e.g., the rail car or flat bed trailer).

Please replace the paragraph starting on page 17, line 10 with the following replacement paragraph:

Turning now to Figure 4, one embodiment of a data file stored in memory device 50A is shown. In this embodiment, the data file includes the following: a unique item identification number (e.g., a package tracking number) 51, a description of the goods being shipped 60, the weight of the goods being shipped 61, any special shipping instructions (e.g., temperature, humidity, and vibration restrictions) 52, insurance terms (e.g., the insurance carrier, the policy number, the amount of insurance, and any deductible amounts) 55, the original shipping date 62, the arrival deadline 63, the origination location 53, the destination 54, any payment terms 64, information about the sender (e.g., sender's name 65, sender's email address 66, sender's telephone number [[69]]67, sender's street address 68, sender's shipping company account number 69), information about the recipient (e.g., recipient's name [[65]]70, recipient's email address [[66]]71, recipient's telephone number [[69]]72, recipient's street address [[68]]73, recipient's shipping company account number [[69]]74), and information about one or more intermediate destinations (75 through 77). Item handling and item content information may include any of the data fields 51-77 described above. Item handling information generally includes data fields, which describe attributes associated with the sender, receiver, shipping company, and insurance company. Item content information generally includes data fields, which describe attributes associated with the item such as an identification number and a description of the item.

Please replace the paragraph starting on page 22, line 26 with the following replacement paragraph:

Figure 5a may also be used to illustrate one embodiment of a method to arrange insurance for a particular item being shipped or mailed. A client of the intelligent shipping agent may contact the intelligent shipping agent to arrange the insurance for a particular item (Step 100[[b]]). In one embodiment, the particular item may be placed

inside a standard sized shipping container with an attached memory device (such as containers 40A-N with attached memory devices 50A-N) (Step 102[[b]]). In one embodiment, the placing of the particular item inside the shipping container with an attached memory device may be performed by a shipping company, by the client or by the manufacturer of the particular item. Note, in some cases the container may need not be used (e.g., if the item is already adequately packaged in a box that has the same dimensions as containers 40A-N). In these cases, the memory devices may be affixed directly to the particular item itself.

Please replace the paragraph starting on page 23, line 10 with the following replacement paragraph:

Next, information about the package to be shipped is transmitted to central server 90 of the intelligent shipping agent (Step 104[[b]]). This information may include the origination and destination of the package, information about the type of package being shipped (e.g., the weight, any special shipping requirements such as temperature, humidity, or hazardous materials), information related to the insurance of the shipped item (e.g., declared value of the insurance, deductible, description of the item insured and type of insurance coverage such as breakage, theft, and loss.), and shipping dates (e.g., shipping deadlines). Central server 90 may then be configured to send out a request for quote based on this information to network members (Step 106[[b]]) and other insurance companies. In another embodiment, the intelligent shipping agent may be configured to search a database for a quote for shipping cost. In another embodiment, central server 90 may be configured to periodically update the database independent of any request for quotes. In one embodiment, a first database may be maintained for shipping information and a second database may be maintained for insurance information. Two separate database searches may be conducted by the intelligent shipping agent, in real-time, for locating shipping and insurance information. Alternatively, in a distributed environment without a central server 90, the intelligent shipping agent may distribute requests for quotes directly to network members without central server 90. In response to the request

for quote, network members may generate quotes for insurance costs for shipping the package to and from their shipping hub. (Step 108[[b]]). For example, the insurance company in Dallas (see hub 88 in Figure 2) may be configured to provide quotes for insuring the package from Dallas to New York and to Atlanta. Similarly, the insurance company in Chicago (see hub 82 in Figure 3) may be configured to generate quotes for insuring the designated goods from Chicago to Atlanta and New York. The hub may also be referred to as an intermediary point.

Please replace the paragraph starting on page 24, line 18 with the following replacement paragraph:

As noted above, in some cases more than one container may be needed to ship the package. In these cases, the network members may provide quotes for insuring only a subset of the packages if they do not have enough capacity to handle the entire set of containers or if a price differential is apparent for partial shipment. The central server may be configured to receive all of the quotes and update a database of insurance prices accordingly (Step 110[[b]]). After the time period for responding to the request for quote has expired, the central server may be configured to search the response from the network members and/or all possible routings in the pricing database to determine the best deal for the customer (Step 112). Depending on the customer's requirements, some routings may be eliminated based on time (e.g., some routings may take too long and thus fail to meet the customer's shipping deadline).

Please replace the paragraph starting on page 25, line 1 with the following replacement paragraph:

The selection of the successful bidder may depend on various criteria such as cost efficiency, reliability, time to deliver, past history and geographic coverage. In one embodiment, the selection criteria may be based on securing the maximum value of a

product or service at the least cost. Once the central server has selected a particular routing for the goods or items to be shipped, it may confirm this routing with the customer, the originating shipping company, the destination, the insurance company, and any intermediate locations/shipping companies (Step 114[[b]]). In one embodiment, the confirmation may be in the form of a purchase order to the insurance company to provide insurance for the particular item starting with the pick up of the particular item from a supplier S at location O and ending with the delivery of the particular item to a customer C at location D. The confirmation may be performed via the network (e.g., e-mail or instant messaging). The central server may also be configured to generate a data file that includes information about the items to be insured, shipped and the selected routing. As noted above, one embodiment of such a data file is shown in Figure 4. This data file may be transmitted with the confirmation sent out by the central server in Step 114[[b]]. The insurance company and/or the shipping company may update (if desired) and store a copy of the data file in the memory device that is attached to the container that will be used to ship the goods (Step 116[[b]]). Next, the originating shipping company may place the container in a carrier 30 that is bound for either the final destination or an intermediate location as specified in the selected routing (Step 118[[b]]). Selected information about the container may also be stored in the carrier's memory device, if desired. Next, the carrier is shipped to the first intermediate location (Step 120[[b]]). As part of the shipping process, confirmation e-mail may be sent out to the central server and one or more of the parties associated with the shipment (e.g., the shipper, any intermediate shipping companies, the insurance company and the recipient). (Step 122[[b]]).

Please replace the paragraph starting on page 30, line 20 with the following replacement paragraph:

Once the container has been inspected for damage, any damage or problems may be noted and appended into the data file. As noted above, the data file may be stored to the memory device and also conveyed to central server 90 (block 166). In addition to damage, the container's weight may be compared with the memory device's weight

information stored in the data file. (Step 168). While the use of weight may be optional, it may be particularly advantageous in international shipping where concerns such as smuggling often arise. By insuring that the weight of the package as received is the same as the weight of the package as shipped, customs officials may be less concerned with additional items being smuggled in the container and thus less likely to open the container and thereby delaying shipment. (Step 168). Additional information to assist in the customs process may also be read from the data file (Step 170). For example, a declaration of the type of goods in the container may be read from the memory device.

Please replace the paragraph starting on page 32, line 3 with the following replacement paragraph:

Turning now to Figure 8, one embodiment of a method for operating central server 90 is illustrated. In this embodiment, central server 90 may be configured to receive updates at any time before, during or after the shipping process. This includes updates received from intermediate destinations I (Step 180). Central server 90 may be configured to periodically check shipping schedules for subsequent intermediate destinations (Step 182) to verify the availability and/or feasibility of the future intermediate destination (Step 184). If availability of shipment through one or more of the subsequent intermediate destinations I is in question (Step 186), then the server may be configured to request quotes for alternate routes (Step 188). If one or more better alternative routes are available (Step 190), then the server may then communicate the newly selected route to all parties to the shipping transaction (Step [[192]]194). For example, in one embodiment the central server may be configured to check weather forecasts and/or travel advisories for selected intermediate destinations. If Chicago is an intermediate destination for a particular shipment scheduled to arrive on the 22nd of January, and if Chicago is experiencing a serious blizzard with travel advisories on the 21st of January just prior to initiation of the shipment, the central server may be configured to attempt to re-route the shipment to avoid the weather problems in Chicago. Similarly, if the regional shipping company in Chicago has indicated that it has a two-day

backlog of packages to ship out, the central server may use that information to find an alternate route. If, however, no issues concerning availability of shipment at intermediate destinations arise, or if no better alternatives are available, then the central server may simply be configured to communicate a verification of the original route to one or more of the parties to the shipping transaction (Step 192).

Please replace the paragraph starting on page 36, line 23 with the following replacement paragraph:

Each LAN 304 includes a plurality of interconnected computer systems and optionally one or more other devices: for example, one or more personal computers 316, and one or more package processing apparatuses 322-324. Package processors 322-324 may, for example, be hand-held devices (e.g., used in connection with a forklift, crane, or automated loading and unloading station as shown in Figure 1K) or conveyor-belt devices as previously described. As illustrated in the figure, some package processors (e.g., processor 322) may be configured to communicate with container memory devices (e.g., container 40B) via a wireless link 320. Other package processors (e.g., processor 324) may communicate with the memory device 50C of a received container 40C by a physical link 326. As also noted above and illustrated at 318, in some embodiments, some configurations of container 40A may have a memory device 50A that is configured to communicate directly with LAN 304 and/or WAN 302 (see e.g., container 40D and memory device 50D). For example, LAN 304 may constructed at a shipping hub (e.g., an airport, dock or warehouse) and may be configured to use a wireless access protocol that supports the dynamic addition and remove of devices (e.g., using Sun Microsystems Inc.'s Jini® protocol). Whenever a container is brought within range of the wireless LAN, then the containers' memory devices (e.g., using internal processors and wireless links such as link 320) may access the network and communicate their data.